

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK**

December 13, 2012

5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

Present: Mayor Donald Kasprzak, Councilors Tim Carpenter (W1), Mark Tiffer (W2), George Rabideau (W3), Jim Calnon (W4), Chris Case (W5), Chris Jackson (W6)

Absent: None

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the regular meeting of the Common Council held on December 6, 2012 are approved and placed on file among the public records of the City Clerk's Office.

By Councilor Carpenter; Seconded by Councilor Tiffer

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

2. PAYROLLS OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS:

RESOLVED: That the payrolls of the various Departments of the City of Plattsburgh for the week ending December 12, 2012 in the amount of \$ 345,110.26 are authorized and allowed and the Mayor and the City Clerk are hereby empowered and directed to sign warrants drawn on the City Chamberlain for the payment thereof.

By Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

3. REPORTS OF CITY OFFICES & COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Report of Fire and Ambulance Responses for the week of December 6 – December 12, 2012
- Report from the Building Inspector's Office from December 4 – December 11, 2012
- Statements of cash receipts from the Library from November 20 – November 27, 2012

RESOLVED: That the reports as listed are hereby ordered, received and placed on file among the public records of the City Clerk's Office.

By Councilor Carpenter; Seconded by Councilor Calnon

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

4. CORRESPONDENCE & RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARDS: None

5. AUDIT OF CLAIMS:

RESOLVED: That the bills Audited by the Common Council in the amount of \$ 3,748,362.67 are authorized and allowed and the Mayor and City Clerk (where required) are hereby authorized and directed to sign warrants drawn on the City Chamberlain for the payment thereof.

By Councilor Rabideau; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter
Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)

6. PERSONS ADDRESSING COUNCIL:

Laverne Hicks 9 Alex Way said back on November 9th I sent a FOIL request to ask if any entities anywhere have asked for abatements for Bombardier. If so, how much, how long and at what cost to the city taxpayers. To date, I have not received an answer. According to the FOIL 5 working days, that was on the 9th of November. Also, on the 3rd and the 11th of November, I requested copies of permits and applications pertaining to the demolition of the old Public Works Building and the old Water and Sewer Building located at 69 – 77 Main Mill Street. This is my 3rd request I am handing it to you. To date I still have not received anything. I would appreciate it if as a taxpayer I am given the common courtesy that this requires.

Mayor Kasprzak said he would pass it along to Mr. Herkalo who is the FOIL officer.

Mike Wagner 35 Smith Street said I came to address the Council tonight because I am concerned about the Budget proposal for 2013. According to the Press Republican and the documents I've viewed on the City of Plattsburgh website apparently it's about a current fund balance of approximately 4 million dollars. I see that in tonight's agenda there's a \$600,000 that's probably going to be deducted from that so that leaves about 3.4 million dollars in the fund balance. The Mayor's proposed budget has a deficit of 2.4 million dollars and is looking to plug that deficit by drawing down the fund balance by that amount. Leaves about no less than a million dollars for future emergencies or future needs. It also raises the concerns of the future budgets. Particularly 2014, 2015. Assuming all else stays the same, which I don't think is a fair assumption, we all know that both costs stays the same another 2.4 million dollar deficit for next year with only a million dollars to plug the hole that means that 1.4 million dollars is either going to have to be raised through additional revenues, by the tax increase, or its going to represent a corresponding decrease in city services to the tune of 1.4 million dollars. And again continuing on to 2015 that represents yet another million dollars in either additional tax revenue or decrease in city services. Taken by the percentages, at least by my math, and again this is starting from the 4 million dollars number which is an approximation based on the Press Republican October 3rd article. I'm sure there's a more accurate number than that. If we simply address this with a tax increase over the next couple of years, and again all else remaining the same, we're looking at approximately a 16% tax increase for 2014 and another tax 9% increase for 2015 probably more. Or we're looking at a decrease in city services. I'm particularly concerned because we've already seen, about a year ago, what happens when a city entity, in that case the Library, over several years draws down its fund balance due to a higher costs then revenues and we ended up with a crisis situation with the Library looking to potentially have to lose 30% of their staff. Fortunately, a workout was arranged. I know that there was some impacts to the employees at the Library in order to make that happen. As well as a reduction in the hours for the Library operations. One that I personally was not happy with as I tend to not get to the Library

myself until Sundays and that obviously doesn't happen anymore since it's not open on Sundays. I realize it's a difficult situation. I feel that the city council has a responsibility to address this with all due diligence as best as they possibly can this year. Next year is an election year which suggests two things that should be important. First of all, the Mayor's proposed budget for 2014 is going to come out approximately 1 month before Election Day. I'm sure that will have a significant bearing on the state of mind of the voters of the City of Plattsburgh for next year's election. Furthermore, the Common Council and the Mayor as you are seated here right now some of you may be lame ducks come November and December of next year trying to work on a budget that the next administration is going to have to suffer through. Or some of you may of course still be here and continue to suffer and deal with that. I've heard through my reading of the City Council minutes, through my readings of articles in the newspaper, blame being passed around in a lot of different places. Increasing health care costs, the management and the increasing costs in the New York State pension, blaming the unions in the City tending to lean towards the Fire and the AFSCME Unions. But ultimately, when Election Day comes around the voters of the City of Plattsburgh are going to look to the City Council and to the Mayor and ask what did they do to help resolve the situation rather than passing blame around.

7. OTHER ITEMS:

A. RESOLVED: In accordance with the request therefore the Common Council approves transferring \$600,000 from the available Fund Balance to the Fire Department account.

By Councilor Carpenter; Seconded by Councilor Calnon

Discussion:

Councilor Calnon said we're moving \$600,000 which is a round number as opposed to a specific number because it truly is a much more complex calculation then some people would believe. We've been at it for a couple of weeks now trying to figure out exactly what payments we have to make. There is still some information that we don't have. For example; we have to be sure we know what retirement rate we have to pay. Is it the year that each retro pays or is it the current rate because it is all being paid in this year. And actually there was one part of the arbitrator's decision that really wasn't clear there seemed to be some contradiction of language. So we've reached out to them to give us a definition. In order to reasonably comply we've been trying to put this together for a couple of weeks now. We're working on getting the actual final numbers so we can issue these checks as soon as possible. So we think that's going to be about \$582,000 if all the payroll work we've done so far is correct then we would have to come up with this \$600,000 transfer. The issue is of course that the benefits that come by percentage; workman's comp, our share of social security and Medicare and the retirement are yet to be paid. They could be as much as another \$240,000. That'll have to go in to next year's budget and again that kind of reflect what Mr. Wagner just spoke about. That's one more pressure that we had hoped to avoid. But, it's one that we're going to have to take in to account as we put together 2013 Budget. So the \$600,000 that we're moving today should allow us to make the retroactive payroll payments very shortly. I would say almost immediately but because they're not quite final yet I'm not sure when the actual check will be written but we're very close and we'll use most of the \$600,000 to do it.

Councilor Rabideau said we're talking about the General Fund in reference to the transfer. I think there was comment made about the Lighting Department and affecting the electric rates. The General Fund is one fund and the Lighting Department is a separate entity by itself with a Board of Directors. And we're the Board of Directors but we don't meet obviously during this particular meeting. Item 7 we're talking about involves the General Fund of the City of Plattsburgh excluding the Lighting Department. And it has nothing to do with the rates of the Lighting Department. I just thought I'd mention for the record and to clarify for everybody sitting here. And the 2 big things, you've always talked about in affecting the budget, was the State of New York and the retirement costs. And of course health costs is correct. But years ago retirement costs was like \$150,000 and now it's up to over 2 point something million if you include Fire, Police and the other employees.

Mayor Kasprzak said in the year 2000 the City was paying \$17,700 for retirement costs and we're over 3 million dollars today and we do not control one part of that decision making that's Albany. And that's what Mr. Wagner part of his discussion was alluding to. But it's easy to say we have to fix all these problems at our level as a Mayor and Council when we don't control any of those costs. If there's anything that anybody's looked at since 2000 for any cost in your entire life and you can use that percentage of increase when you don't control it. It's pretty simple to say you better fix it but it's a little more difficult than that. So George your point about those costs health care has increased tremendously those are things uncontrollable.

Councilor Rabideau said we've always said those are things that are major things. Also, the other comment I'd like to make, and I've always said this in the past, is when it comes to the taxpayer, and this is my belief only, it doesn't reflect anybody else. I think what the taxpayers care about is that day they get the tax bill. And when they look at that tax bill and they see the tax rate that's what the taxpayer's care about. We have the hard part of trying to figure out how to keep it level and maintain it in a fashion that's affordable. I think the Mayor, Jim Calnon as Chief Budget Officer and the Council working on it after the Mayor's Budget together I think everybody has worked to keep the tax rate level. I honestly believe this is what they look at they get their tax bill what's the tax rate what do I have to pay. That's the end result of everything.

Councilor Tiffer said not that I disagree with you. You are right it is important to keep a sustainable level of tax rates. You don't want an increase every single year at a double digit rate or obviously beyond the cap. But I think we also have to keep in mind the level of services and the quality of life for the community. At some point you can't compromise tax rate for having no services and no quality of life. I think there is a level in between both that needs to be met in order to keep the community happy.

Councilor Rabideau said good point.

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)

ACTION TAKEN: Adopted

Follow up Action: None

B. RESOLVED: In accordance with the request therefore the Common Council approves that Bid No. 2012-10-1 "Two 2500 KVA Pad Mounted Transformers" be awarded to Power Sales Group, Inc

in the total amount of \$83,516.

By Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Discussion: None

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

ACTION TAKEN: Adopted

Follow up Action: None

C. RESOLVED: In accordance with the request therefore the Common Council approves that the Mayor be authorized to sign the 2011-12 Urban and Community Forestry Grant, Contract #T304807.

By Councilor Tiffer; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Discussion:

Councilor Tiffer said I just wanted to thank Kevin for taking the initiative on going after this grant and securing it. This is a long term investment. Trees obviously will outlive us so planting them and making the community more green is something that I am definitely in favor of.

Councilor Carpenter said is this a matched grant?

Councilor Calnon said yes.

Councilor Jackson said in kind service.

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

ACTION TAKEN: Adopted

Follow up Action: None

8. TRAVEL REQUEST: None

9. RESOLUTIONS FOR INITIAL CONSIDERATION:

- 1.** Request from David Powell Chief Plant Operator WPCP that Contract # 2010-18 “Sodium Thiosulfate for the Water Pollution Control Plant” with Thatcher Chemical Company Inc be extended for one year for a total amount of \$61,875.
- 2.** Request from David Powell Chief Plant Operator WPCP that Contract # 2011-25 “Sodium Hypochlorite for the Water Pollution Control Plant & Water Filtration Plant” with Surpass Chemical Company, Inc be extended for one year for a total amount of \$96,500.
- 3.** Request from Jon Ruff Environmental Engineer for the Declaration of Lead Agency Status for WPCP Mitigation Project.

4. Request from Jon Ruff Environmental Engineer that a change order from CDM for “Cumberland Avenue Pump Station” be approved and there is no cost change.
5. Request from Jon Ruff Environmental Engineer that a proposal from CDM for “Footbridge Sewer Crossing” be approved and the total cost will not exceed \$37,000.
6. Request from Jon Ruff Environmental Engineer that a proposal from B&L for “Akey Landfill Post Closure Monitoring” be approved for a total lump sum of \$33,200.
7. Request from Jon Ruff Environmental Engineer to attend the “New York Water Environment Association 2013 Annual Meeting” in New York City, NY from February 4 – 6, 2013 at a total cost not to exceed \$1,795.

10. NEW BUSINESS: None

11. CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mike Wagner 35 Smith Street said I would like to address with the Library budget crisis last year. I think the taxpayers noticed. I know there were lots of supporters coming to the various Library Board meetings and to the City Council meeting. I was not able to attend any of those but I certainly kept track of the proceedings through conversations, through the media. We’re going to notice if the Library closes. We’re going to notice if we’re having a heart attack and it takes the ambulance 5 minutes or 10 minutes to get there rather than 30 seconds or 2 minutes because of diminished fire and emergency services. We’re going to notice when there’s more Meth Labs in the North Country. God knows every week we seem to have another Meth Lab reported in the Press Republican. We’re going to notice when our next door neighbors getting busted for a Meth Lab because we don’t have enough Police protection. We’re going to notice when the City gym closes down and the recreational programs that are offered there are not offered any more. I know there’s hard choices to be made. I don’t relish the job that each of you has in making those choices. What I would ask, I guess on behalf of myself and the rest of the city taxpayers, is be upfront and communicate with us. Let us know what these changes are going to be over the long term not just in this budget year.

Motion to Adjourn by Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Tiffer
 Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
 (All voted in the affirmative)

MEETING ADJOURNED: 5:49pm